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JOB SATISFACTION: AN IMPERATIVE FOR THE COMING TEACHER SHORTAGE

by

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ABSTRACT

With critical teacher shortages projected and competition from business increasing, the importance of attracting and retaining teachers cannot be ignored. Drawn from a research base, this study recommends means by which principals, school districts, education schools, and teachers, themselves, can collaborate to provide opportunities for teacher career satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction: An Imperative for the Coming Teacher Shortage

As major impacts go, those made by Adolf Hitler, Betty Friedan and William Hewlett have minor correlation. Yet, the influence of their undertakings on the contemporary education community is linked, and in the coming decade their legacies will contribute to, in the words of the 1986 Carnegie report, "a challenge without precedent."

Following many years of teacher surpluses, the tide has turned and for the coming 10 years, at least, the demand for teachers will outstrip the supply. Much of the blame for the teacher shortage can be laid on the "baby boom" which followed World War II. The multitude of teachers needed as the children of war veterans moved through school are at retirement age. Veterans of the Korean conflict and even World War II, who earned their teaching credentials with the aid of the GI Bill, also have reached senior status and now, just when retirement is piercing the ranks, the offspring of baby boom children are starting school.

If that were not sufficient burden, the sexual revolution has presented women, traditionally the major elementary school teaching source, the opportunity to choose from an unlimited number of careers previously closed to them. Members of minorities are afforded many of the same choices. Often, the "new" jobs, such as those in the computer industry, mean salaries

and perquisites a quantum jump from those in the education field, and bond-floating school districts find little room in the budget for faculty hot tubs and handball courts.

At the same time, because the number of exceptional and disadvantaged students is growing, the teacher-student time/attention ratio is decreasing. Not to be ignored is the increasing interest in adult education and the potential need for more teachers in non-traditional settings. The Carnegie report, A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (Carnegie Forum, 1986) estimates that 23 percent of each college graduating class will be required to meet the need for teachers in the early 1990's. Plainly, the recent gains of approximately half of one percent a year will be staggeringly insufficient.

With the free market system likely to be the deciding force, teachers would appear to be in the driver's seat. If this is so, then the question of job satisfaction, as important to educators as it is to computer analysts, is of more than abstract interest--not only to teachers but also to their principals and to the school districts that hire them.

The subject of teacher job satisfaction is hardly virgin territory for analysis. It has been explored from "Appeal of the Principal" to "Zone of Freedom," and at countless alphabetical stops between. One reason for this protracted study is that factors of job satisfaction shift with the times and fluctuate with the mores, in effect reflecting facets of the changing

culture. The gratifications of yesterday may be standard equipment today and obsolete baggage tomorrow. Another reason is that opinions, theories, and survey results vary as much as the personalities, places and instruments involved.

However, certain patterns do emerge with enough consistency to warrant consideration when teacher job satisfaction, adequate staffing and, ultimately, excellence in education is in question.

Teacher Professionalism

The general conclusion of job satisfaction studies is that teachers want to be seen and treated as the professionals they consider themselves to be. In describing characteristics that differentiate the school from other organizations, Sergiovanni and Carver (1973) write, "First, the school is a professionally oriented organization. That is, school members are concerned with the achievement of manifest goals . . . and are, by and large, professionals as opposed to skilled, semiskilled, or unskilled workers" (p. 135).

Education is seen as an attractive profession, in part, they report, because it offers "a career with meaning, one which provides an opportunity for self-enrichment and for societal improvement" (p. 27), a job rich in intrinsic potential and satisfaction.

Others recognize the desire of teachers for professional status but see the chance for realization of the idea in a less

than positive light. John Goodlad (1984) writes, "In general the practicing teacher . . . functions in a context where the beliefs and expectations are those of a profession but where the realities tend to constrain, likening actual practice more to a trade" (p. 193). A professional, by definition, requires a pre-developed knowledge and skills that are further shaped in practice, and he/she is assumed to hold a certain degree of autonomy once in action. Although teachers may begin their careers with these abilities and expectations in hand, Goodlad says they are apt to find the realities of their work are not conducive to professional growth.

If, then, the teacher expects acknowledgement and treatment as a professional to be the ultimate in career satisfaction, it is vital that this expectation either be met or changed. And if teacher job satisfaction is the base upon which the profession hopes to build a corps to meet the gathering host, then job expectations must be realistic.

Teacher Career Expectations

Fulfillment of expectations, or lack thereof, can determine the job satisfaction of a teacher, and the internal conflict occasioned by derailed expectations can lead to real stress and job burnout. Goens and Kuciejczyk (1981) write, "A large gap between one's ideal performance level and the reality of achievements and accomplishments causes distress. If self-

imposed expectation outpaces performance, teachers will feel stress, frustration, and anxiety" (p.25).

The negative force of unmet expectations is not a phenomenon peculiar to teachers. They quit, Goodlad (1984) says, for the same kinds of reasons other people do. In his extensive study of schools throughout the country he found:

> It was a personal frustration and dissatisfaction in the teaching situation that appeared to bother most teachers. If one goes into teaching with expectations of being able to teach and be of service and then is frustrated in realizing these expectations, dissatisfaction sets in and quitting becomes an alternative. There is nothing unusual about this. (p. 172)

Complicating the subject is that the career expectations of teachers in general can vary with the situational forces of time, place and conditions. An individual teachers may alter their expectations, sometimes with little realization of the change, in response to the expectations that others, particularly administrators, lay on them.

The lesson is that colleges, school districts and teachers themselves need to tailor a teacher's job expectations to fit the possibilities of fulfillment and, in a more professional vein, to provide the mechanism for the teacher to realize these career goals. Opening the opportunities for teachers to participate in multi-level decision-making is viewed as a major move in this direction.

Teacher Decision-Making

The correlation of staff decision-making with job satisfaction has been linked by a number of researchers, including Ben Brodinsky (1984), who writes, "The more opportunity and power you give employees, the more effective they will become and the more satisfaction they will get from their jobs" (p.40). Secretary of Education William Bennett (1986), writing of "elementary school professionals," says, "Teachers need to be given more control over the terms of their own work and more opportunities to take the initiative to improve their own effectiveness" (p. 128).

One of the major findings in a study of teacher job satisfaction conducted by Lipham, Dunstan and Rankin (1981) in urban and suburban Wisconsin secondary schools was that "staff involvement in decision making was significantly and positively related to staff job satisfaction" (p.83). In a similar, unpublished study conducted in 1985 by Waunch among nine rural school in Washington state, parallel conclusions were reached.

Both the Wisconsin and Washington surveys showed the significant differences in job satisfaction exist between staff with low involvement in decision-making and those with medium or high involvement. Both, too, indicated that teachers were limited in the level of decision-making allowed, having been given more say in technical (classroom) decisions than in

managerial (school-wide) decisions. In no case did teachers indicate they were too involved in the decision-making process.

Vital as decision-making power is to teacher job satisfaction, no consideration of it can be made without studying the relative leadership of the principal and that frontier where principal authority and teacher autonomy meet. Personality, communication skills and professional abilities are all called into play when the collaborative relationship is attempted.

Teacher-Principal Collaboration

Collaboration--between teacher, principal and sometimes others--is usually viewed as a positive action, but in saying that, it is important to attach a couple of negative qualifiers. Collaboration is not the usurpation of the teacher's autonomy in the classroom nor the principal's authority in the school, and it is not necessarily the beginning of a beautiful friendship, although the value of a friendly principal is not to be dismissed. Teachers and principals can collaborate without permutation of their positions. For the professional health of each, it is important that they do so.

Some think teacher autonomy is not all it's cracked up to be. The teachers in his study, Goodlad (1984) says, appeared to function quite autonomously:

> But their autonomy seemed to be exercised in a context more of isolation than of rich professional dialogue about a plethora of challenging educational alternatives. The classroom cells in which teachers spend much of their time appear . . . to be symbolic and predictive of their relative isolation from one another and from sources of ideas beyond their own background of experience. (p.186)

Thus, the importance of a principal cultivating collaborative conditions and facilitation behaviors becomes clear.

Although in studies by Waunch (1985) and Lipham et al. (1981) principals were rated high in supportive leadership behavior, the latter found they were rated lowest in work facilitation (helping teachers with scheduling, coordinating, planning and providing resources), the category that had the highest relationship to staff job satisfaction. Waunch's study, undertaken partly to aid participating principals in goal-setting, concluded that principals--as a major effort--should actively attempt to support the faculty and assist each member in job performance.

Another essential element of satisfactory interaction within the organization, according to Lovell and Wiles (1983) is communication, and they maintain that all supervisors need to have an understanding of and competency in it. Henjum (1984) says that the principal's rapport with teachers depends heavily on his/her understanding and acceptance of each faculty member as

a result of communication, while Wheeless, Wheeless, and Howard (1983), in analyzing the predictors of job satisfaction, say that it hinges first on communication with supervisors and next on the correlated element of participation in decision-making.

Work facilitation and communication are tools useful to the collaborative effort, but use of them does not guarantee that such an effort exists. Much depends on the leadership employing them. Shanker (1986), noting his agreement with the Carnegie report that a school must have strong and effective leadership, adds that strong leadership doesn't necessarily mean that which is hierarchical and authoritarian, "as was once widely supposed" (p. 133). The traditional principal who is both manager and instructional leader leaves little for the teacher to do but follow orders and this, he says, hardly squares with the idea of treating teachers as professionals. He cites the Carnegie observation that there are many ways to organize leadership.

In that vein, Sergiovanni and Carver (1973) contend that leadership should not be the prerogative of an individual, even if that individual is officially detailed to lead. Because there are many and diverse functions of leadership, for administrative effectiveness it is appropriate to involve "as many members of the group as possible in all activities, including leadership activities" (p. 209). Nevertheless, and particularly, the school executive maintains the responsibility.

Major shifts in school organization, extending through the academic to the political realm and breaking historical barriers, are forecast in these assessments. Will differentiated staffing, career ladders and the lead teacher concept offer greater teacher motivation than what is currently in place? The present system of teacher/principal interaction will, at the very least, be rearranged.

Teacher Motivation and Growth

Part of the complexity of assessing career motivation is that teachers cannot be stereotyped. Another is that factors that contribute to job satisfaction are not opposites of factors that contribute to job dissatisfaction. This theory is based on the work of Frederick Herzberg (1959) and presents the idea that rather than being ranked on a continuum, effecting factors are either satisfiers or dissatisfiers. Factors consigned to the first group--achievement, recognition, responsibility--are motivators and related to intrinsic values. Those in the second--interpersonal relations, salary and working conditions, administrative practices, personal life--have low motivational potential but can lead to decreased performance if not provided for. They are related to extrinsic matters derived from conditions of work, while the satisfiers are related to do work itself.[1]

Although the extrinsic conditions of teaching must be considered, regardless of how non-motivational they may be, motivators that deal with intrinsic values offer greater creative opportunity as well as challenge for educators concerned with teacher job satisfaction. The reasons people enter and/or remain in teaching vary with experience, personality, times and conditions, personal needs and even the sexes, and can go so far as to include "a need to acquire power and manipulate others" (Lucio & McNeil, 1962, 1969, p. 166). There usually are more beneficent reasons, however. "Historically," write Roark & Davis (1981), "teachers have been motivated by the desire to serve. When they feel their service is unappreciated, morale declines and this in turn affects efficiency" (p. 40). Thus, while motivating factors can be as controversial as merit pay or career ladders, they can also be as uncomplicated and inexpensive as verbal recognition. Brodinsky (1984) says, "Recognition of a job well done" by supervisors is of major importance, partly because "teachers receive fewer tangible signs of recognition than other professionals do" (p. 38).

According to literature, much can be done to increase motivation by expanding the reward system, and especially by tying it to responsibility, all of which is the basis for differentiated staffing. It is a concept not without its critics, among which are some teacher union officials.

Some form of differentiated staffing appears not far off. A recent article in the Wall Street Journal reported, "Career ladders, aimed at helping schools to retain high-caliber teachers, are spreading fast," but advises that their long-term effect is unknown, and that educators fear they "can easily turn into merit plans with a different name" (Ricklefs, 1987, Sec. 2, p.1). Among recommendations of the Carnegie task force is the introduction of the category of Lead Teacher, while the Holmes group proposes a three-tiered structure composed of Career Professionals, Professional Teachers, and Instructors.

The stipulated purpose of the new concepts is to provide career development opportunities for teachers while taking advantage of the abilities of highly skilled and experienced teachers. In most cases, according to Carnegie data, they are used in the same capacity as the novices. "Good teachers have few opportunities to advance within their profession," the Holmes report says, and "little or no time for work with other adult professionals to improve their knowledge and skills" (Holmes Group, 1986), let alone to prepare, analyze or evaluate their own work.

Literature suggests, then, that motivation coupled with opportunity will help direct teachers toward greater job satisfaction. In a needs hierarchy developed by Lyman Porter (1963), teachers move past the security and affiliation stages of their careers to the self-esteem stage, which some analysts

(Sergiovanni & Carver, 1973) consider the most powerful motivating level because it deals with the teacher's need for recognition, respect and consideration as competent professionals. From this they pass through autonomy to the self-actualization stage at which, with little need of supervision or regulation, they are able to operate as professionals--self-motivated, responsible, and dedicated.

Self-actualization, as defined here, is the ultimate goal toward which most motivators are directing teachers. Getting there is something else. "Education," the Carnegie report states, "like other professions, will have to structure itself so that it can make the very best use of a distribution of talent. That means reorganization" (Carnegie Forum, 1986). Reorganization means change, seldom easy on even a minor scale. This is going to be a major movement, and it must be made acceptable to educators--even before administrators or politicians--if a monumental teacher shortage is to be averted.

Recommendations

If the classroom situation were to remain unchanged, there still would be need for the education profession to meet the challenges posed by teacher job satisfaction. With a mammoth student population lumbering forward, simple need is becoming charged with alarm, and solutions must be devised soon, despite impediments presented by historical precedents, nay-sayers and a sometimes McGuffey-age outlook. Recommendations for increasing teacher job satisfaction are outlined here.

Recognize and Treat Teachers as Professionals

The importance of regarding and treating teachers as professionals can hardly be questioned. If it were nothing more than meeting the Webster definition, teachers would qualify. Literature generally refers to them as professionals and to their calling as a profession, yet this may be more rhetorical payoff than real cognizance. It is not unlike the situation in which the shrewd employer gives his clerk a title in lieu of a raise and then wonders why his new "administrative assistant" is unhappy with minimum wage and pedestrian tasks. Talk is cheap, action dear.

Among actions that would grant teachers the treatment and regard commensurate with professional ascription are providing them more autonomy and additional responsibility, greater opportunity for career development and advancement, assistance from lay volunteers, collaborative programs with other teachers, administrators and community professionals such as artists, scientists and business people, and the means for greater decision-making power in managerial as well as technical matters.

Teaching climates allowing for more sustained creativity and less routine maintenance would promote a greater professional climate. Less bureaucracy and authoritarianism, even the benevolent kind, as well as such prosaic things as increased salary and adequate supplies would contribute to fulfilling the teacher's need for professional status.

Reformers should also consider starting at the beginning. Schools of education and others involved in teacher preparation would be wise to look at their own models of professionalism and, if dictated, doctors, heal thyselves. So often, both in teacher education programs and in practice, teachers are conditioned to understand that teaching is prescriptive, with all the directions found in a how-to manual of theory and methods. Education needs to open its doors and, as is the case with other professions, enable teachers to observe the work of their peers, to study professional practice in action, to analyze, adapt, and then execute.

Project Realistic Career Expectations for Teachers

Whatever the career expectations of teachers--and they can vary widely--they should contain a basis for effectuation if job dissatisfaction is not to set in. To achieve this, the matter should be approached from two positions--that of the teacher education institution which should adjust candidate expectations to agree with reality, and that of school districts which should increase opportunities for teachers to achieve their aspirations.

Communication and collaboration between colleges and school districts is imperative if future teachers, as well as those in practice, are to have a correct perception of their work. Teacher educators, principals, supervisors and peer professionals all can aid teachers in understanding the parameters and

possibilities of the profession. They also can help them avoid and, if necessary, deal with the frustration and dissatisfaction that come with unmet, and sometimes idealistically self-imposed, expectations.

Equally important in this equation is the shared knowledge of the expectations that the principal, administrators, students, parents and community have of the teacher. If the teacher is expected to serve as a social arbiter, for example, then all parties should be aware of that going in.

An innovative collaborative structure between education schools and school districts, involving communication between educators, parents, students and community, would enable teachers to establish realistic expectations and then to reach some of their anticipated--and heretofore unattainable--goals.

Utilize Teachers in Decision-Making Roles

Not every teacher is interested in making decisions beyond the classroom, but the number who do want to participate is increasing and the questions they want to deal with range from selecting textbooks to determining the administrative structure of the school. Because there is compelling data that decision-making is a pertinent factor in teacher job satisfaction, a mechanism providing for such input should be available.

It is important that teacher decision-making be part of a collaborative process, that the decision-making body--whether ad hoc or permanent--be granted appropriate power, and that is

assume consequent responsibility. Collaboration is more than a contemporary buzz-word, and persons participating in cooperative decision-making efforts should remember to check their partisan guns at the door. Meeting as non-belligerents with a common cause, yet with contrasting points of view and diversity of experience, participants can make their decisions on a pro-active, non-defensive basis.

For too long, both teachers and students have been cited primarily for working well by themselves. The ability to do so is commendable but it is not always the most productive method. On the other end of the spectrum, teachers sometimes, often of necessity, become members of the herd, using their mass as the only force available to them. In the case of collaborative decision-making both teachers and administrators need to move to the higher ground, concentrate on the ultimate goal of student achievement, and savor the stew of enthusiasm, debate, concern and charity that is the nourishment of the collaborative process.

Encourage Principals in Collaborative Leadership

Literature supports the contention that a strong and supportive principal, secure enough to foster participatory management with teachers without losing personal leadership capabilities, will create the greatest job satisfaction among his/her staff. Though studies show that not everything depends upon the principal, they also suggest that a principal's behavior

is very important to staff satisfaction. A leader strong enough to treat teachers as professionally independent persons does not have to use the authoritarian measures of an hierarchical power structure to steer the school. On the other hand, he/she need not throw out the entire framework but instead use its support to develop human potential and interaction. A principal deals from the authority of competence and personal experience as well as that of the principalship.

Although studies show that teachers appreciate the sociability of a "friendly" principal, most are more concerned that he/she be a dynamic leader who is supportive and helpful to them in performing their jobs, who provides opportunities for career autonomy and leadership development, and who treats them as professionals. Central to the interaction is communication, and it is important that principals be skilled in such exchange.

Collaboration of principal with teacher is central to the latter's career satisfaction but neither collaboration nor job satisfaction is an end in itself. They are the means to effectiveness in teaching. According to literature presented, teachers want principal support for the purpose of carrying out the instructional process. Collaboration should be curriculum-centered, student-centered, achievement-centered, and the mission of all should be the same as that of education at every level--the growth and development of the student through excellence in teaching.

Provide Teachers Motivation for Self-Actualization

Major shifts in school organization will be necessary if all teachers are going to have the opportunity to achieve meaningful job satisfaction and reach the level where they will be able to operate as self-motivated, accountable professionals needing little supervision or direction. Because such a change touches both the academic and political theaters, there are a number of pitfalls awaiting those who attempt to implement it. The result won't come as the answer to a quick fix, and the program will have to be developed within a collaborative construct.

Among the plans suggested to meet career development needs of teachers are differentiated staffing and variations of it. Theoretically, such a disposition would provide the chance for teacher advancement within the ranks, eliminating the necessity of one having to leave the classroom in order to climb the career ladder. Whether advancement is offered motivationally to all interested teachers, awarded to those who are skilled and prepared to fill more complex roles, whether all jobs are categorized into narrow slots for strict specialization, whether roles are filled for specified "terms of responsibility," or whether some other formula is devised, caution must be exercised that a new bureaucracy is not formed. Stifling, top-down hierarchies made up of teachers can be as dysfunctional as those formed by administrators, and perhaps more so.

Whatever instrument is adopted, it must be remembered that its purpose is to provide, both intrinsically and extrinsically, the motivation and opportunity that will allow teachers to realize their potential as professional educators and to provide them the satisfying career means to bring forth the highest possible achievements from their students.

Conclusion

Change is coming to education and it's not coming politely. Numbers and mores are turning the academic world into something barely imagined a decade ago. The projected need for teachers and the competition it will take to supply and keep them in school make it essential to study the well-documented research regarding teacher job satisfaction.

In many ways, teachers are no different than employees in other fields. Generally, they want decent salaries and benefits, suitable working conditions, recognition, advancement opportunities and appropriate responsibility. But teachers are unique, too. In their classrooms, aside from adherence to rules, policies and clerical demands, they are autonomous, and yet outside, beyond the doors of those rooms, they have been without influence. Now they are looking toward opening not only their own classroom doors but also the doors of the school building and stepping out into the community to help render decisions that will affect education.

Opening doors in order to step out allows others to step in. Teachers are looking for more collaboration with fellow teachers, and asking for supportive and directly facilitative help on the part of the principal, and maybe even the community. They are considering the pros and cons of differentiated staffing and related innovative plans that would offer, finally, the opportunity for teachers to advance in their field without the ironic necessity of leaving it. Teaching would no longer be a predictable term of 30 years--unless the teacher wanted it that way. The goal is attainment of self-actualization.

There is no mystery as to why this particular change is supercharged with potential conflict. Writing about individuality and conformity, Etzioni (1964) says:

> The ultimate justification for a professional act is that it is, to the best of the professional's knowledge, the right act. . . .If he errs, he still will be defended by his peers. The ultimate justification of an administrative act, however, is that it is in line with the organization's rules and regulations, and that it has been approved . . . by a superior rank. (p.76)

It is easy to figure that the deck is stacked against any timely success, but with so much at stake it is vital that a workable composition be established between the polarities of teacher autonomy and administrative regulation. The threat of a

catastrophic teacher shortage provides not only the motivation and necessity for changes that will benefit education as a whole, but also the opportunity and receptivity important to introducing those changes.

The time when teachers were viewed as victims is past. While not exhaustive, the literature presented here indicates that teachers, if they are to achieve satisfaction in their careers, should have the chance to emerge from the bureaucratic environment in which they have been confined and move into that creative, risky, stimulating world that is the province of the professional.

Reference Note

1. For discussion of Herzberg's theory, see T.J. Sergiovanni and F.D. Carver, The New School Executive: A Theory of Administration (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1973), chap. 4.

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